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ABSTRACT

Findings from a longitudinal case study that explored the relationship between principals' supervisory practices and school success in meeting long-range planning goals are presented in this paper. Methodology involved a questionnaire, interviews, and observations of five elementary school principals in Riverside County, California. Findings indicate that newer principals were more likely to postpone development of evaluative practices or strategic planning, and that principals with 3-5 years of experience implemented well-developed planning cycles into their staff supervision processes. An outcome of the study was the facilitation of good supervision practices in relation to long-range planning. One figure is included. The questionnaire is included in the appendix. (2 references) (LMI)

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A CASE STUDY OF FIVE PRINCIPALS AT WORK: QUESTIONING THE IMPACT OF SUPERVISION ON LONG-RANGE PLANNING

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I. Area Overview

Riverside County, where Moreno Valley Unified is located is one of the fastest-growing areas in the nation. Its total assessed valuation increased from 994 million in 1983 to just under 3 billion in 1988.* The Moreno Valley Unified School District has grown at an average rate of 16% per year since 1983. Moreno Valley is also ethnically diverse, with the following ethnic percentages of enrolled students: American Indian, .33%; Asian, 4.36%; Pacific Islander, .51%; Philippino, 1.62%; Hispanic, 22.44%; Black, 16;11%; and White, 54.63%. This enrollment factor is due, somewhat, to the fact that the community of Moreno Valley surrounds March Air Force Base.

II. The Project

A longitudinal study, with five elementary principals as co-researchers, have been studying: strategic planning for the curriculum; principals' supervision practices; and a relationship to site-based management.

III. The Schools in the Project

A brief overview of the participating schools in the research study is presented, following.

Badger Springs Elementary - A K-5 elementary school, currently existing as a school-within-a-school at a K-8 site; school is mixed ethnically but located in a new housing tract

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*Statistics courtesy of Bruce Buckner, Internal Auditor, Riverside County Office of Education.

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just North and East of March AFB; the principal was new this year; the school did some planning but not full-blown strategic; approximately 650 students.

Edgemont Elementary - A school located in an older area of town; serves lower S.E.S. students; principal in third year; strong 3-year strategic plan developed last year; approximately 700 students.

Midland Elementary - 920 students; traditional schedule; located in what is considered a "nice" but older section of Moreno Valley; 70% white students; Midland students do well on standardized tests; principal new this year, so no concerted strategic planning has yet been done by this principal; 4-year School Improvement Plan (SIP) was in effect when principal assumed administrative duties.

Northridge Elementary - New, prestigious math/science magnet school; principal started school, selected all staff; multi-track year-round (MTYR); 867 total students; thorough strategic planning was done at outset; 70% white; 30% minority student population.

Sunnymeadows Elementary - 920 students, K-5; MTYR (one of 5 in district); magnet school; 51% white, 19% black, 21% Hispanic, 4% Asian, 5% other; principal has been there 1 1\2 years; completed a School Improvement Plan after becoming principal; carried out Effective Schools Survey at end of this year in preparation for Program Quality Review next year.

IV. Principal Profiles

Brief descriptions of principals participating in the study are presented, as follows.

Mary Jean Bigelow [MJB], Badger Springs - First year as a principal; spent two years as vice principal; seasoned teacher; very level-headed, bright, and positive administrator; talks about what's done with kids as more important than her paperwork.

Janet Warner [JW], Edgemont - Has been a principal for three years; well-trained for administration with solid background of teaching and good track record at this school; very positive attitude; high standards, expects the same of others as of herself; has taken many "seminal" actions at the school.

Dan Brooks [DB], Midland - First year as principal, two years previous as vice principal of another school; experienced teacher with very smooth approach to administrative duties; good with staff, parents and community; very active in community-sings, known as a ham - but respected for his seriousness and devotion to education.

Darlene Dolan [DD], Northridge - Very competent, experienced principal, known in administrative circles throughout the district as a role model for others; very positive and supportive of staff but tells them up-front that she expects them to "work harder than they've ever worked before" to achieve the high

standards of the school; has written many grant proposals and secured large sums of money from business/industry to support her school's programs and strategic planning goals.

Steve Camadena [SC], Sunnymeadows - A fairly new principal (2 1/2 years); works well with his staff; is carrying out many planning efforts; feels he has to fight the district office for many amenities for his school and programs; [modestly,] sees himself as a leader-in-the-making; has been very open to the learning opportunities of this research project.

V. A Longitudinal Study: The Nature of This Year's Study

This year's study has focused on the relationship between strategic planning at the school sites and the supervisory practices of principals. As can be determined from the overview, a variety of schools are represented: two of the schools do in-depth strategic planning; one does a fair amount - with various kinds of planning beginning to come together as a concerted effort; and two do very little formal strategic planning but are simply "feeling their way," with new schools, new principalships and new staff.

Since some of these principals are former students of mine (Tier II, California's Professional Services Credential), the purpose of the study has been two-fold: 1) to follow the principals onto their sites and support their efforts there by offering participation and study in the research of their administrative practice, and 2) to ask questions that we were

interested in answering during the course of the leadership classes and seek their answers in the actual practice on the school site.

For this year, the first year in the longitudinal study, we have asked ourselves one overall question: "Do principals' supervision practices have a relationship to the school's success in meeting long-range planning goals?" and three supporting questions: 1) "While carrying out observations and other supervision practices, was there conscious attention paid to the school's long-range goals and to the meeting of those goals?"; 2) "How did your school do in meeting its goals for the year?"; and 3) "How do these goals relate to longer-range goals of the school?"

Responses to the overall question were gathered from: 1) responses to the "Protocol for Principals' Project," administered by a research assistant (Appendix A); 2) responses to the three questions presented above; 3) interviews of principals by the principal investigator (author of this paper); and 4) observations by the principal investigator and other members of the research team.

VI. Findings

Background: In the Tier II leadership classes for practicing administrators, I have found that the most uncomfortable topic of discussion is that of supervision and evaluation practices of principals. In a recent article in

Theory Into Practice, I describe the phenomenon this way, "Administrators avoid the practice of supervision if at all possible. Even the topic, as an item of discussion, is shunned. In my classes for educational administrators, the input is most sparse when we discuss the administrator's responsibilities for supervision*," Blair (1991), p. 102.

This experience has served to bring to the surface a problem that we, in the profession, have known "in the backs of our minds." That is, if administrators aren't comfortable with supervisory practice, including evaluation, and if they can't see its merit in relation to the long term, then it is unlikely that supervision will be practiced effectively, if at all.

This research project, then, was first an effort to fix in principals' minds the need for attention to supervision, and was, in some regards, therefore, a "demonstration" project. It was also, secondly, an effort to observe a diverse group of principals at widely-ranging types of schools to determine if links could be established between effective long-range planning and a successful utilization of supervisory practices.

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*Supervision, as defined in this article and used in the project, is meant to imply the overarching term which encompasses the supervisory functions: evaluation, collaborative action, promotion/retention, staff development and other support.

Results: Principals responded to Question One (While carrying out observations and other supervision practices, was there conscious attention paid to the school's long-range goals and to the meeting of these goals?) as follows:

MJB: "Although the school's long-range goals are in my mind when doing an observation, I record in my notes what is actually happening during the lesson. That is, what the teacher is doing and what the students are doing. Because of participating in this study I will, in the future, tie into the evaluation the relationship or connection of the lesson with our school goals. Informal observations of the teacher and the classroom environment month-to-month or week-to-week give information as to what is happening toward long-range goal attainment."

JW: "Yes. When we wrote our school plan last year, we, as a staff, developed school goals for our school plan. When making my observations, I kept in mind the goals and responded to what I saw in a descriptive manner by writing down what I observed. I shared my observations with each teacher in a 20-30 minute conference. We reviewed our goals with staff at the beginning of the school year and periodically throughout the year. Each teacher chose a component committee (from PQR) on which to work. These committees planned, implemented, helped others implement, and evaluated by monitoring throughout the year. Then recently, we had a SIP day where we had a mini-PQR to look at what we did, how we did it, and what we need to do next year in each goals

area. We (teachers, parents, other staff and administrators) decided on the goals for next year. We brainstormed and prioritized in order to develop our goals. Next year, I will evaluate staff and myself as to our planned goals."

DB: "We established grade level goals and objectives based on areas of emphasis found in our school-based coordinated plan. When scheduling observations of classroom instruction, I indicated whether teachers should focus on particular goal areas, i.e., hands-on math activities, English-language arts, and/or visual-performing arts. In the written report and in the follow-up conference, I emphasized the specific planning and/or teacher behaviors as related to the effectiveness of these specific content areas. I reflected on such things as planning integrated lessons that bring meaningful content into academic skills areas, the use of math manipulatives to develop critical thinking and the inclusion of arts with other "academic" concepts."

SC: "As I interact with my staff, I am constantly reaffirming our commitment to both our school mission and the goals that are related to our mission statement. Since both of these were generated collaboratively by the staff and the administration, everyone is familiar with the direction that out school is taking. In many of the post evaluation conferences that I always have when a teacher is evaluated, it is the teacher that makes reference to our goals as we discuss the observation."

Question Two (How did your school do in meeting its goals?)

responses indicated that all schools met their goals although "not always in the way originally intended" (JW) or were "successful to a degree in all areas" but with "room for improvement in the coming year" (SC).

Question Three (How do goals relate to long-range goals of the school?): "Woven together as a cycle of school planning - as we accomplish goals, we develop new ones," (DB); "We are in the process of viewing short-range goals in light of the longer-range goals," (MJB); "Our goals for this year and next lead us to our future goals," (JW); and "Our ultimate goal is to provide each student . . . the opportunity to work to their fullest potential. . . to become positive contributors to society . . . I feel that if we are proficient in addressing our curricular goals, we will be successful in our ultimate goal," (SC).

Conclusions/Implications for Future Research

Figure 1 presents a schematic of the status of each principal in relation to the principalship, the school, the neighborhood and his or her administrative practice.

As depicted in Figure 1, some of the things that we've learned are:

1) We have affirmed what we already suspected - that newer principals are prone to set aside the development of both good evaluative practices and good future planning in favor of the practical, immediate needs of the new position and the site.

2) We believe that the "Hawthorne Effect" of the study has

Figure 1.

PRINCIPALS' PROJECT
Profile of Principals for Study Year 1990-91

	Principalship			School			Neighborhood			Adminis. Practic	
	New	Less Than 3 Yrs.	Less Than 5 Yrs.	Magnet School	MTYR School	K-5	Low	Mid SES	High	Strat. Plan	Evals. Used
Principal											
Bigelow	+					+		+		-	-
Brooks	+					+			+	-	-
Camadena		+		+	+	+		+		-	+
Dolan			+	+	+	+			+	+	+
Warner		+				+	+			+	+

been used to good advantage, by highlighting the need, from the very beginning of administrative practice, for good supervision practices in relationship to long-range planning. We believe that, because of the study, emphasis was placed on this area. New principals were asked to focus on (and, therefore, develop) the good administrative practice of supervisory-linked and supervision-supported planning.

3) With regards to strategic planning, in general, we believe that asking made it so, and that those principals that hadn't planned before have done so for next year. Also, as next year's goals were developed, principals were thinking ahead, as a result of the study, to how they would incorporate goals achievement into the staff evaluation process.

4) We've observed an interesting pattern of principal development. Newer principals, even though exceptional in personal and professional attributes, are prone to postpone development of both strategic planning and supervisory practice "until things settle down a bit."

Principals that have been on the job a bit longer, have realized the merits of solid planning but have yet to discover, fully, the relationship between supervision and school goal attainment.

More seasoned principals (between three and five years on the job) in our study have implemented well-developed planning cycles, integrated with their staff supervision.

It must be recognized, however, that all principals in this study are of exceptional quality. It would be inaccurate to assume, therefore, that by the fifth year all "seasoned" principals currently practicing in American schools have put strategic planning cycles in place and understand the relationship to staff supervision. However, because the principals in the study are recently-trained administrators, I enjoy entertaining the notion that newer trained folks, benefiting from better university training practices, will consistently be able to accomplish this practice of excellence. Implications for Future Research - We are enjoying the study of administration, as it unfolds in practice, and we also enjoy learning together. We want to continue questioning the relationship between long-range planning and supervision/evaluation. We want to collect more on-site data of planning groups in action, as well as principals' evaluations of staff. Therefore, we will continue to collect data in this area during the second year of the study and will continue to refine our understanding of the relationship.

Additionally, because all in the study are interested and vital individuals, we will also look at recent work relating to Chaos Theory and educational administration. See, for example, Griffiths, Hart, Blair (1991). This effort will be a secondary theme of the second year of our research. Principals will be presented with the conceptual theory in September and will be

asked to keep journals of experiences for later determination of a relation to the theory.

Conclusion - It has been very interesting to see some of our training expectations borne out, and it has been rewarding to observe how well-prepared our newly-trained administrators are to meet the challenges of the "real world." Ours has been a somewhat unique experience, but one which I would recommend to all professors of educational administration.

References

Blair, B.G. (1991). Does "supervise" mean "slanderize"? Planning for effective supervision. Theory Into Practice, 30(2), 102-107.

Griffiths, D.E., Hart, A.W., and Blair, B.G. (1991). Still another approach to administration: Chaos Theory. Educational Administration Quarterly, 27(3), 430-451.

APPENDIX A

PROTOCOL FOR PRINCIPALS' PROJECT

LONG-RANGE GOALS, VISION

0.1 Describe long-range planning processes which you have carried out with your staff.

0.2 Describe your vision statement for the school.

0.3 How is the long range plan set out (e.g., written? where kept?)

0.4 When was the plan done? How often is it reviewed?

0.5 What are your major goals for this year? For next year?

0.6 What is the relationship of the long-range plan to the evaluation processes of teachers?

0.7 What is the relationship of the plan to the curriculum? the instructional program?

SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION

1.1 Does the supervision and evaluation system in your school serve the purpose of improvement as well as accountability?

1.2 How does your vision for the school relate to teacher supervision and evaluation?

1.3 Do teachers play a key role in developing and periodically reviewing performance standards of effective teaching?

1.4 Are data on teacher performance drawn from a variety of sources?

1.5 How frequently do you observe in classes?

1.6 How do you share the information?

1.7 Do you believe that you are perceived by your teachers as a credible source of knowledge regarding instructional improvement?

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Does your school have a written plan for ongoing, systematic staff development?

2.2 Does this plan include statements of expected changes in teacher knowledge, behavior, understanding, attitude?

2.3 Does it also include: a rationale for proposed changes for teacher performance? a schedule of learning activities?
an inventory of resources needed to accomplish performance goals?
a monitoring system?

INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT

3.1 How would you describe your role in instructional management on the site?

3.2 Would you please list outstanding examples of your involvement?

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS

4.1 Can you describe yourself as a principal, giving the areas in which you are most interested, most involved, strongest. In other words, give your primary characteristics as a principal.

4.2 Can you relate these characteristics to your background--both educational and professional.

INFLUENCE FROM COMMUNITY CONTEXT

5.1 What is the influence of the community on your site and your actions as principal?

INFLUENCE FROM INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

6.1 What is the influence of the district office on your site and your involvement as principal?

INFLUENCE FROM INSTRUCTIONAL CONTEST

7.1 What is your influence on the instructional process, that is, teachers and their teaching? And, vice versa, teachers' influence on you?

OUTCOMES AND CLIMATE

8.1 What are the expected student outcomes?

8.2 What is the expected climate?

SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING OBSERVATIONS

9.1 Can you provide a schedule of upcoming observations that you will be making, so that the project director can arrange to visit at one or more of these times.